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Navy & Marine Corps Medical News
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MN970418. Overheard Remark Leads to Lifesaving Diagnosis
Corpus Christi, TX - One corpsman's attentive listening
led a team of Navy medical professionals to promptly
diagnosis and treat a disease that threatened the life of a
three year old recently.

HM3 Hugh Wheeler, working in the immunization clinic at
Naval Hospital (NH) Corpus Christi, overheard Karen Dunn
policing her young son, Austin, as he used the waiting room
furniture as an indoor jungle gym. Repeatedly, Dunn
reminded Austin about his "dizzy spells" that might cause
him to fall and hurt himself.

Dizzy spells? In a apparently healthy three year old?

Wheeler paused from his work to asked Dunn about her
son's spells, and, concerned, called the pediatric clinic.
The corpsman described Austin's symptoms to pediatric nurse
LT Candace Colston, NC, who told Wheeler to bring Dunn and
Austin to the clinic.

There, nurse Mavis Fulton and pediatrician Dr. Maria
Louisa Lira examined Austin, paying special attention to his
enlarged abdomen. Lira immediately arranged for a
radiological examination.

Minutes later, X-rays were taken and reviewed by
radiologist Dr. John Larrinaga. They showed a mass in
Austin's stomach.

Within days, Austin underwent abdominal surgery to
remove a large pre-cancerous tumor.

Austin is now fully recovered, with, in the words of his mother, "a scar on his tummy that will forever remind us of how blessed we are."

By LT Kim Zalan, NC, NH Corpus Christi and Vera Ando-Winstead, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

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MN970419. Navy Expands Eligibility for MSC Board

Washington, DC - A recent message released by the Chief of Naval Operations has expanded the number of Sailors who are eligible to apply to the inservice procurement board for Medical Service Corps (MSC) designation.

The inservice procurement program is a commissioning avenue for enlisted personnel for designation as a MSC officer as either a health care administrator or physician assistant.

Previously, the program allowed only Sailors in the HM or DT ratings to apply. Now, the program is open to all enlisted ratings in pay grades E-5 through E-9.

Applicants must be serving on active duty as enlisted personnel in any rating of the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Naval Reserve, or U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. Naval Reservists and Marine Corps Reservists on active duty for special work or one-year recall are not eligible for the program.

For more information, contact CDR Mark Boman, MSC, Medical Service Corps Community Manager, (703) 693-2327.

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MN970420. USS ENTERPRISE Answers 9-1-1

At sea in the Atlantic - When the Canadian Navy ship HMCS Iroquois sent out the equivalent of a 9-1-1, USS ENTERPRISE (CVN 65) answered the call.

ENTERPRISE was engaged in flight operations when it received a distress call from Iroquois: An officer was experiencing chest pains. Could ENTERPRISE help?

"Iroquois didn't have the facilities to handle this kind of situation, so we responded to the call," said CDR Charles Barker, MC, ENTERPRISE's senior medical officer.

Iroquois was 200 miles east of Naval Medical Center (NMC) Portsmouth, and ENTERPRISE was at least 100 miles closer than the shore medical facility. If it was a heart attack, the ENTERPRISE's quicker response could mean the difference between life and death.

"We decided it would be better to send out our general medical officer, LT Pat Grover, and HM3 Eric Winkler with an advanced life support unit," said Barker.

A helicopter carrying the medical team raced to the Canadian ship to treat the patient and bring him back to the ENTERPRISE for tests.

"Our initial tests revealed there was no muscle damage done to his heart," said Barker.

The patient was sent to NMC Portsmouth for further testing to determine if there are problems with his heart

vessels.

ENTERPRISE is currently conducting carrier qualifications in the Virginia Capes operating area.

By JO3 K. Scott Cook, USS ENTERPRISE

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MN970421. Remote Town Welcomes Navy Medical Team

Whidbey Island, WA - A Naval Reserve medical team from Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island flew to the remote town of Point Roberts recently to hold a health fair for the small community.

For the second consecutive year, Naval Reserve Unit Naval Hospital Bremerton, Detachment H, spent the day providing health care training to a town that has no doctors, dentists or medical facilities. The team was flown there by Army Reservists in a CH-47 Chinook helicopter.

A team of Army veterinarians from NAS Whidbey also came to vaccinate local animals.

Point Roberts is a community cut off from the rest of Washington State. The five-mile peninsula is surrounded by British Columbia, Canada, and is the most northwestern point in the continental United States.

"The closest hospital we have access to is in Bellingham, which is 45 miles south of the town through two border crossings," said Henry Rosenthal, Point Roberts Chamber of Commerce president. "I think it's wonderful that the Naval Reserve has taken the time to teach our community preventative health care information."

Health seminars covered food poisoning, blood pressure, recreational injuries, spinal cord injury prevention, rodent control, stress management, legal wills and trusts, and CPR training. More than 15 residents became certified in CPR.

"Health care is a huge issue here," said local resident Karen Jenkins. "This training is really helpful for all of us."

In a display of gratitude, Point Roberts' Senior Citizens Center provided the medical team with homemade cookies, pastries and a barbecue. More than 275 residents attended the event.

By Bill Austin, NAS Whidbey Island

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MN970422. Corpsman Wins International Karate Championship

Yorktown, VA - HM2 Pablo E. Ramos from the Naval Ophthalmic Support and Training Activity (NOSTRA) in Yorktown, VA, won the 1997 Chinese National Wu Shu Championship.

By-invitation-only international competition was held in Henan Province in China, a four hour bus ride from Beijing.

The competition was based on double elimination. Ramos had to first win the men's middleweight sparring division, in the 35-39 age group. From there, he fought other middleweights. Finally, after five wins

and no losses, he found himself up against the heavyweight champion. His victory made him the 1997 Grand Champion.

Ramos has been a long-time competitor in the sport. In February, he won the Hampton Roads Regional Championship for men's middleweight 35-39 age group. In April, he won the Virginia State Championship, and in June, the National Championship for his age and weight category.

Next on Ramos' list is the 1998 Goodwill Martial Arts Games. As a member of Team USA, he will travel to Mexico in January 1998.

By HMC(AW/FMF) George Hoover, NOSTRA

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MN970423. Navy Anesthesia Society Hosts Fall Update

San Diego - The Navy Anesthesia Society (NAS) will host a Fall Update meeting on October 16-17 in San Diego.

Navy, Army and Air Force civilian and military anesthesiologists are invited.

The update will include topics in anesthesia and analgesia. It is being held the days before the annual meeting of the American Society of Anesthesiologists being held in San Diego.

For more information, including how to register, contact the Society's Secretary LCDR David Elkins at e-mail elkinsdave@aol.com or call (619) 532-8943.

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MN970424. Naval Hospital Bremerton Changes Phone Numbers

Bremerton, WA - All phone numbers at Naval Hospital Bremerton changed Friday, September 26 as part of a system up-grade that will more than double the number of lines and add voice-mail accounts for improved customer service.

Except for the main hospital phone number, which will now be (360) 475-4000, phone numbers will retain their last three digits.

"Not all the digits in the phone numbers will change," Kirouac said. "If you just substitute 475-4 for the first four digits and retain the last three, you'll have the correct number to connect you to the department you need."

The area code, 360, did not change.

The Defense System Network (DSN) prefix also changed. The new prefix is 494.

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MN970425. TRICARE Question and Answer

Question: When will the last regions implement TRICARE?

Answer: There are three regions that have yet to implement TRICARE. They are TRICARE Regions 1 (Northeast), 2 (Mid-Atlantic) and 5 (Heartland).

TRICARE Region 1, also known as TRICARE Northeast, includes the northeastern U.S., Washington DC and northern

Virginia. TRICARE Region 2, or TRICARE Mid-Atlantic, includes North Carolina and Virginia, except Washington DC suburbs. TRICARE Region 5, or TRICARE Heartland, includes Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, the St. Louis area, and most of West Virginia.

Anthem Alliance for Health, Inc., was awarded the TRICARE contract in Regions 2 and 5, and TRICARE is expected to be implemented May 1, 1998.

The contract for Region 1, which includes the National Capital Area, has not been awarded, but is projected to go on line in Summer 1998.

For more information about TRICARE, contact your local health benefits advisor or nearest TRICARE Service Center. Additional information is also available on the Department of Defense (Health Affairs) Homepage on the World-wide Web at <www.ha.osd.mil>.

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MN970426. Healthwatch: The Truth About Cigars

Cigars - they're flashy, trendy, and it seems like anybody who's anybody - including such notables as Demi Moore, Jack Nicholson and David Letterman - is lighting up.

The number of cigar smokers in this country has increased at an alarming rate over the past five years. The increase is in part due to the hype about cigars seen in magazines and on television.

"Many people smoke cigars hoping to appear sophisticated, and then justify it by saying they don't inhale," said LCDR Evan A. Thorley, MSC, tobacco projects officer at the Bureau of Naval Personnel in Washington, DC.

According to Thorley, looking to cigars as a "healthy alternative" to other tobacco use because you don't inhale much is a serious mistake. Smoke from cigars is denser than cigarettes, with higher concentrations of carbon monoxide and toxic residues. In short, a little cigar smoke can go a long way towards endangering your health.

Not inhaling and merely holding the cigar in your mouth puts you in the same risk category as those who use smokeless tobacco. Nicotine does not have to be inhaled to damage the heart and blood vessels; it can be absorbed through the thin membranes of the mouth into the blood stream. Nicotine increases the heart rate and constricts the blood vessels, which decreases blood flow to the heart and other areas of the body.

"Tobacco use in any form is dangerous," said Thorley. "It is the number one cause of preventable illness and premature death in this country."

The death rates for cigar smokers in the U.S. are 34 percent higher than for non-smokers. Cigar smokers are also three to five times more likely to die of lung cancer than non-smokers.

Being trendy is not worth a lung and certainly not worth your life. Don't be fooled. Cigars may be en vogue now, but they still pose the same old health risk that

tobacco always has.

By Kimberly Allen Rawlings, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

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October is Healthy Lung Month, sponsored by the American Lung Association. The theme is "When You Can't Breathe, Nothing Else Matters."

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Feedback and comments are welcome. Story submissions are encouraged. Contact Jan Davis, MEDNEWS editor, at e-mail <mednews@bms200.med.navy.mil>, telephone 202/762-3223 (DSN 762-3223), or fax 202/762-3224.